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**MERCHANT CAPTAIN PLEADS GUILTY TO  
NEGLIGENTLY CAUSING DEATH OF ANOTHER**

SACRAMENTO—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that MAARTEN SPRUIT, 49, of the Netherlands, pleaded guilty this morning before United States District Court Judge William B. Shubb to one count of misconduct or neglect of ship officers. Almost immediately after taking SPRUIT's change of plea, Judge Shubb sentenced defendant SPRUIT to a year of probation, which includes six months of home detention. In addition, as part of his plea, SPRUIT agreed not to serve as the master or captain of any vessel which enters United States waters for a period of twelve months.

This case was investigated by Coast Guard Investigative Service, the San Francisco Coast Guard Marine Safety Office, the Port of Stockton Police Department, and the Stockton Police Department.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney James P. Arguelles, who is prosecuting this case, SPRUIT was the Master of the M/V Oceaan Klipper, a vessel which was docked at the Port of Stockton on August 7, 2004. At approximately 2000 hours, SPRUIT authorized the launch of the life boat of the M/V Oceaan Klipper, with ten persons, including himself, aboard. As part of his plea agreement, SPRUIT admitted that he negligently failed to provide any of the individuals on board with personal flotation devices. Shortly after the launch of the lifeboat, exhaust began leaking into the main cabin. SPRUIT did not, however, terminate the launch of the life boat, but rather allowed personnel to move topside, notwithstanding the fact that the life boat was designed to have all personnel remain inside. A short time later, SPRUIT made a sharp turn, which caused three of the individuals who were topside to be ejected into the water. Although two of these individuals were able to maintain contact with the life boat and were quickly recovered, a third individual remained in the water, and after rescue attempts failed, ultimately drowned.

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